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ABSTRACT

This report to the Louisiana legislature describes the results of the student assessment phase of a mandated accountability program, in which criterion referenced tests of reading performance in vocabulary, phonetic analysis, structural analysis, comprehension, study skills, and word attack skills were administered to 160,771 students in grades 4, 8, and 11. Tables showing reading domain performance for each level are included. Subgroup report findings are discussed, based on: (1) class size; (2) community type; (3) school size; (4) birth dates; (5) student sex; (6) Title I participation; (7) Title I nonparticipation; (8) bilingualism; (9) ethnic groups; and (10) length of enrollment. (MH)

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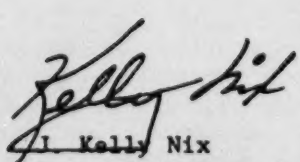
FOREWARD

Accountability is a way of saying to Louisiana students and their parents that we care about what happens in our schools, that we care whether or not children learn. Accountability says that learning is not a mysterious process but a natural part of living.

Though all children learn, each learns at his/her own rate. Each is capable of contributing to Louisiana and to our Nation. When a child makes no contribution, our schools have received a bad report card.

Accountability defines what children should know and when they should know it. It is concerned with how these things are taught and it assesses our level of success in the teaching process. Accountability is a tool to be used or misused. This report is the Department's way of expanding its usefulness and is a step toward the goal of this administration.

EACH CHILD —— WELL TAUGHT



J. Kelly Nix
State Superintendent of Education

INTRODUCTION

Act No. 709 of the 1976 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature amended as Act No. 621 in the 1977 Regular Session (Title 17 Sections 391.1 through 391.9 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950) legislates a system of accountability for the entire educational community.

In mandating a system of accountability of Louisiana schools, the legislation provides a framework within which the school systems, the State Department of Education, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Legislature can work cooperatively to establish a true plan for accountability.

The student assessment phase of the accountability program, as distinguished from the phase having to do with school personnel evaluation and management, rests on the development and implementation of a statewide assessment program.

The success of the student assessment program is dependent on the fullest possible participation at the local level. For this reason, the State Department of Education has appointed statewide advisory committees who are working and will continue to work with the State Department of Education staff in the selection of goals and objectives, in the selection of items to measure these objectives, in the refinement of the overall instrument in each basic skill area, and in the analysis and interpretation of the results.

TEST DEVELOPMENT

The assessment instruments used to measure performance of Louisiana fourth, eighth, and eleventh graders were based on the minimum standards of preceding grade levels as set forth by a core group of Louisiana educators, the Reading Advisory Council on Minimum Proficiencies. These standards are described in the Louisiana publication, Minimum Standards/Maximum Goals for Reading, Grades 1-12 (Bulletin 1488).

The initial learning objectives upon which the tests were based were developed for the Louisiana Department of Education by Intran Corporation during the 1976-77 school year. The objectives were selected for field-test purposes by a statewide advisory group. The same group reviewed the test items to check them for appropriateness to the Louisiana curriculum and student population and for their usefulness as test items. Four items per objective were field-tested in the spring of 1977 on an approximate 10% sample of Louisiana third, seventh and tenth graders. Every parish/city school system was represented at one or more grade levels.

Concurrent with the field-testing of initially defined objectives was the development of Bulletin 1488, Minimum Standards/Maximum Goals for Reading, Grades 1-12. Objectives and items selected for final use in the 1977-78 Reading Assessment were approved by the Reading Advisory Council on the basis of the criteria of analysis of the Spring field-test data and the match of the original objectives to minimum standards for the preceding grade as defined by Bulletin 1488, Minimum Standards/Maximum Goals for Reading.

The criterion-referenced instruments assessed the performance of Louisiana students in the following areas of domains: Grade 4 - Vocabulary, Phonetic Analysis, Structural Analysis, Comprehension, Study Skills; Grade 8 - Vocabulary, Phonetic Analysis, Structural Analysis, Comprehension, Study Skills; Grade 11 - Vocabulary, Word Attack Skills, Comprehension, Study Skills.

The Grade 4 test measured 16 objectives, with four items per objective for a total of 64 test items. The tests for grade 8 and grade 11 measured 20 objectives with four items per objective for a total of 80 test items.

TEST ADMINISTRATION

A Request for Proposals was issued by the Louisiana Department of Education and proposals were submitted by potential contractors. Both internal and external evaluations of all proposals were conducted prior to the final selection of the contractor. The criterion for selection was cost effectiveness for services rendered. The contract for test design, printing, distribution, scoring and data analysis was awarded to Westinghouse Learning Corporation/Measurement Research Center, A Division of Westinghouse Learning Corporation.

The criterion-referenced tests were administered in the fall of 1977 to 160,771 students in grades 4, 8, and 11. The Louisiana Department of Education coordinated the statewide testing. Test administration was conducted by the local school systems.

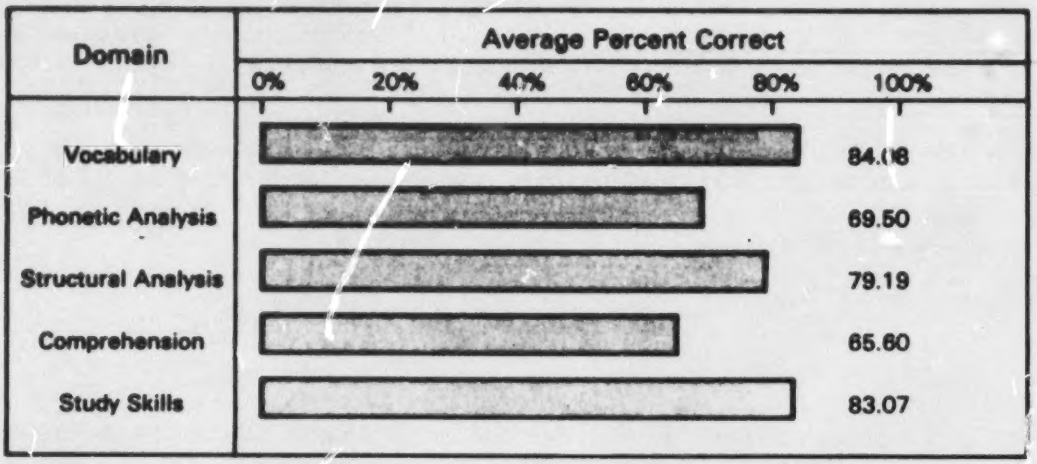
REPORTING

Parish and state-level results were reported back to the school systems. School level results were made available to the parishes at their expense on an optional basis.

Domains are not consistent across grades but are unique to grade-level: therefore, any comparisons across grades are not valid.

Student performance was reported in terms of average percent correct (APC). Four items were used to measure attainment of each objective. Depending upon the number of items to which a single student responded correctly, if any, his percent correct would be 0, 25, 50, 75, or 100 for 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 correct responses. The APC for group is determined by dividing the total number of correct responses to items in a domain or an objective by the number of students who were tested in that domain or objective and multiplying by 100.

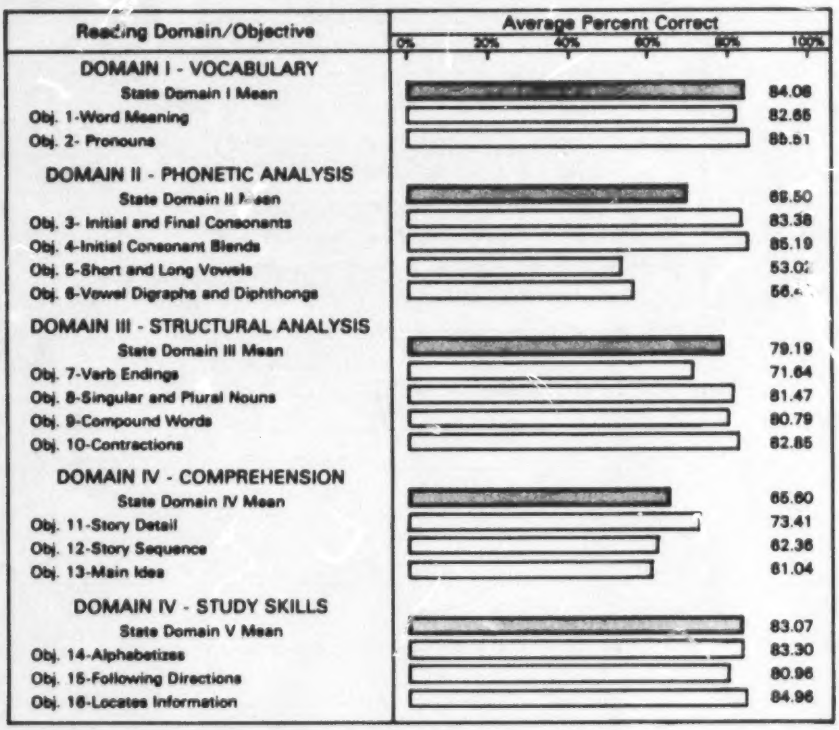
FIGURE 1
1977-78 STATE-WIDE READING DOMAIN PERFORMANCE
GRADE 4



SUMMARY OF GRADE 4 STUDENT DOMAIN PERFORMANCE

For Grade 4 students', average percent correct ranged from 65.60 on the domain, **Comprehension** to 84.08 on the **Vocabulary** domain. Performance on the domain **Study Skills** was only slightly below performance on **Vocabulary**. Average percent correct on **Structural Analysis** was nearly ten percentage points higher than average percent correct on the domain, **Phonetic Analysis** (79.19 versus 69.50, respectively). Performance on the latter domain, while superior to performance on the **Comprehension** domain, differed by less than five percentage points.

FIGURE 2
1977-78 STATE-WIDE DOMAIN/OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE
GRADE 4



SUMMARY OF GRADE 4 STUDENT PERFORMANCE BY DOMAIN/OBJECTIVE

VOCABULARY - Less than three percentage points separate student performance on objectives measuring **Word Meaning** (82.65) and **Pronouns** (85.51).

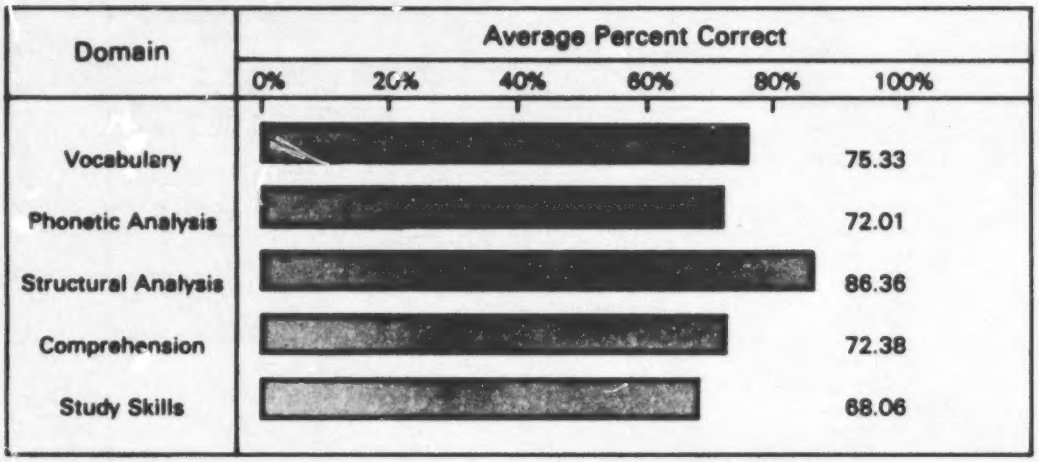
PHONETIC ANALYSIS - Slightly less than two percentage points separate student performance on **Initial and Final Consonants** (83.38) and **Initial Consonant Blends** (85.19). Weaknesses are indicated by a 32% decline in student performance on **Short and Long Vowels** (53.02) and **Vowel Digraphs and Diphthongs** (56.40).

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS - Approximately ten percentage points separate student performace on **Verb Endings** (71.64) and other objectives measuring this domain. Student performance on **Singular and Plural Nouns** (81.47), **Compound Words** (80.79) and **Contractions** (82.85) indicates areas of relative strength.

COMPREHENSION - Highest student performance is on **Story Detail** (73.41). Student performance drops more than 16 percentage points on **Story Sequence** (62.36) and **Main Idea** (61.04).

STUDY SKILLS - Approximately five percentage points separate student performance on **Locates Information** (84.96) and **Follows Directions** (80.96).

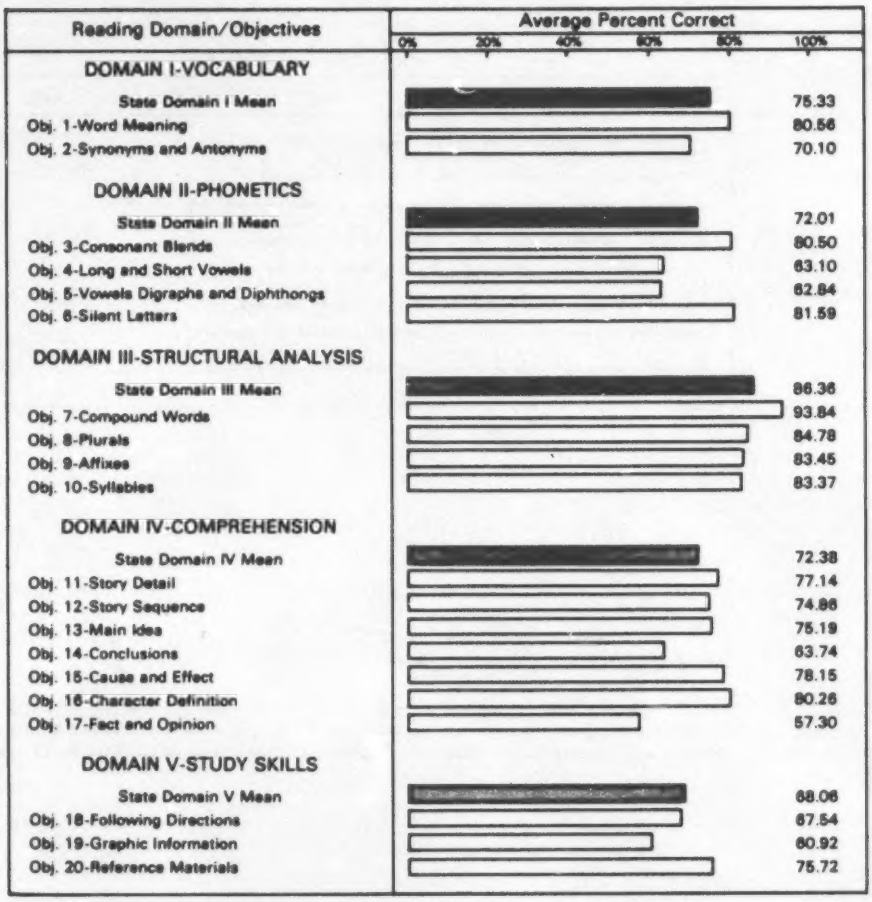
FIGURE 3
1977-78 STATE-WIDE READING DOMAIN PERFORMANCE
GRADE 8



SUMMARY OF GRADE 8 STUDENT DOMAIN PERFORMANCE

The highest average percent correct achieved by Grade 8 students was on the domain, **Structural Analysis** (86.36) while the lowest score achieved was on **Study Skills** (68.06). Scores on the other three domains were practically identical between **Comprehension** and **Phonetic Analysis** (72.38 versus 72.01, respectively) and slightly higher on **Vocabulary** (75.33).

FIGURE 4
1977-78 STATE-WIDE DOMAIN/OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE
GRADE 8



SUMMARY OF GRADE 8 STUDENT PERFORMANCE BY DOMAIN/OBJECTIVE

VOCABULARY - Approximately ten percentage points separate student performance on objectives measuring **Word Meaning** (80.56) and **Synonyms and Antonyms** (70.10).

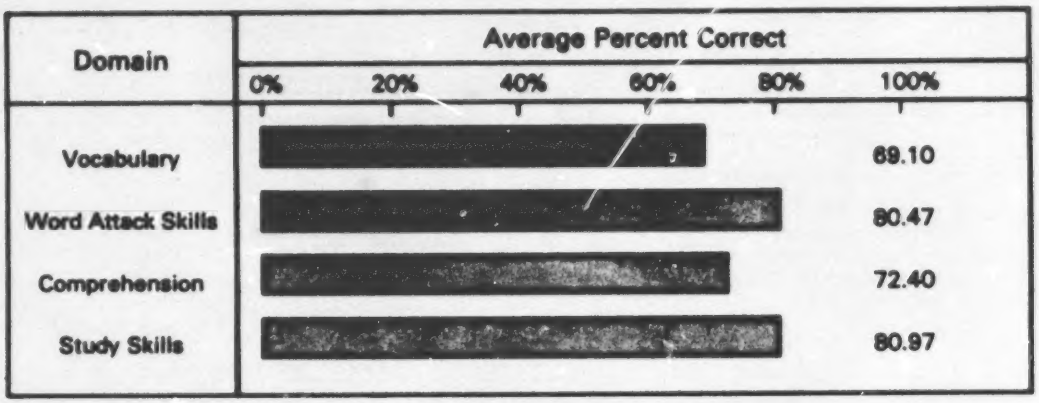
PHONETIC ANALYSIS - Highest student performance is on objectives measuring **Consonant Blends** (80.50) and **Silent Letters** (81.59). Student performance drops approximately 18 percentage points on objectives measuring **Long and Short Vowels** (63.10) and **Vowel Digraphs and Diphthongs** (62.84).

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS - Approximately ten percentage points separate student performance on **Compound Words** (93.84) and other objectives measuring this domain. Student performance on **Plurals** (84.78), **Affixes** (83.45) and **Syllables** (83.37) indicates areas of relative strength.

COMPREHENSION - Student performance on objectives measuring **Story Detail** (77.14), **Story Sequence** (74.86), **Main Idea** (75.19), **Cause and Effect** (78.15) and **Character Definition** (80.26) is consistent. There is a decline in student performance from 17 to 24 percentage points on objectives measuring **Conclusions** (63.74) and **Fact and Opinion** (57.30).

STUDY SKILLS - Student performance on the objective measuring **Reference Materials** (75.22) is approximately eight to fourteen percentage points higher than student performance on **Following Directions** (67.54) and **Graphic Information** (60.92).

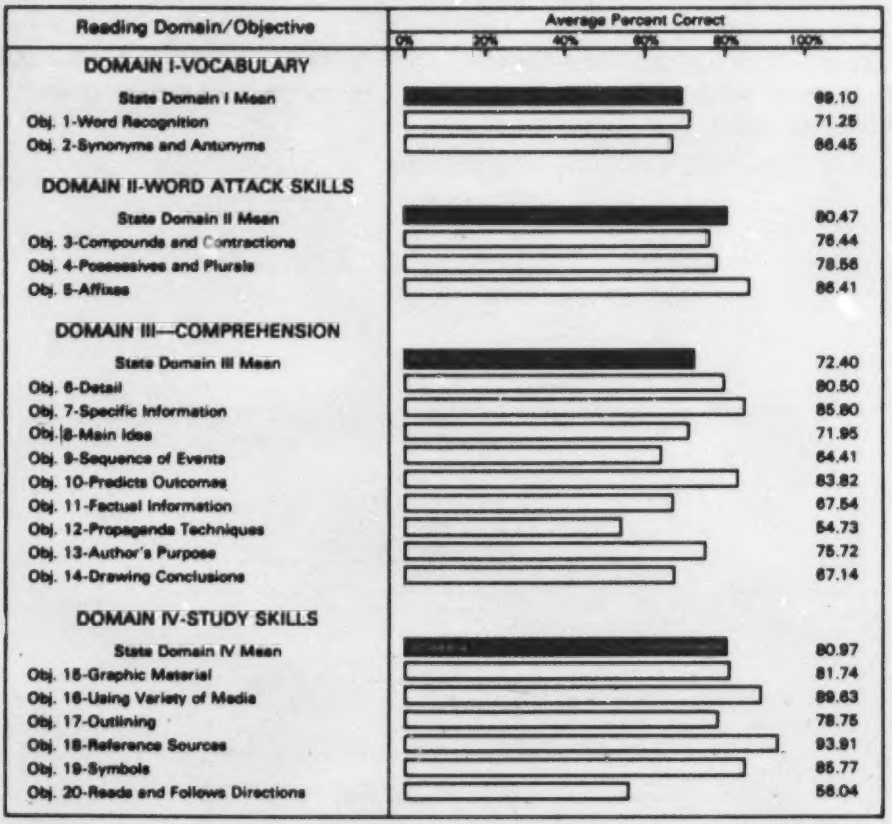
FIGURE 5
1977-78 STATE-WIDE READING DOMAIN PERFORMANCE
GRADE 11



SUMMARY OF GRADE 11 STUDENT DOMAIN PERFORMANCE

Performance of Grade 11 student on pairs of the four domains tended to be almost identical for one pair and within four percentage points with respect to the second pair. Average percents correct were 80.97 and 80.47 on **Study Skills** and **Word Attack Skills**, respectively. On the other pair, average percents correct were 72.40 on **Comprehension** and 69.10 on **Vocabulary**.

FIGURE 6
1977-78 STATE-WIDE DOMAIN/OBJECTIVE PERFORMANCE
GRADE 11



SUMMARY OF GRADE 11 STUDENT PERFORMANCE BY DOMAIN/OBJECTIVE

VOCABULARY - Approximately four percentage points separate student performance on objectives measuring **Word Recognition** (71.25) and **Synonyms and Antonyms** (66.45).

WORD ATTACK SKILLS - Approximately two percentage points separate student performance on objectives measuring **Compounds and Contractions** (76.44) and **Possessives and Plurals** (78.56). Student performance increases approximately six to eight percentage points on the objective measuring **Affixes** (86.41).

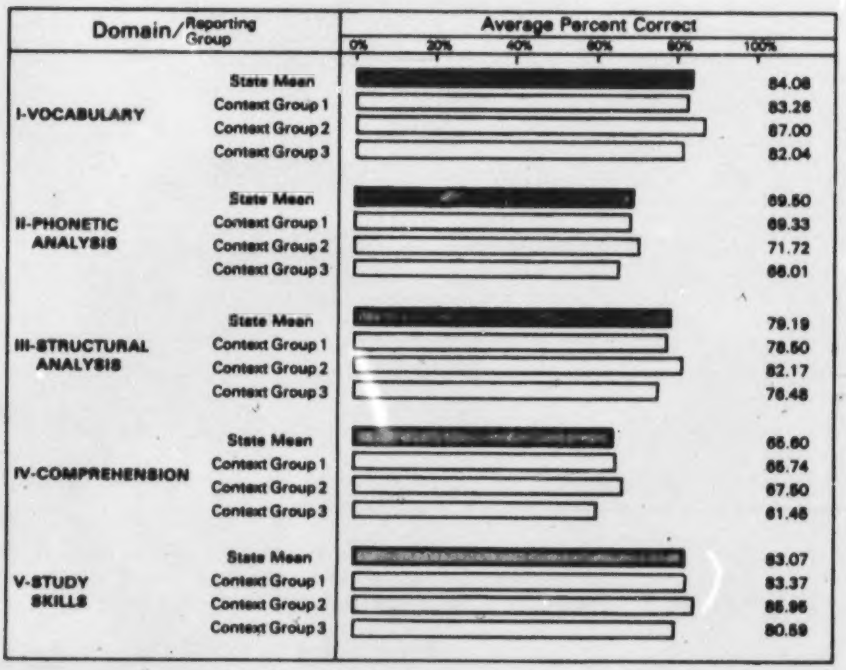
COMPREHENSION - Highest student performance is on objectives measuring **Detail** (80.50), **Specific Information** (85.80) and **Predicts Outcomes** (83.83). Students performed less well on objectives measuring **Author's Purpose** (75.72) and **Main Idea** (71.95). Student performance was poorest on objectives measuring **Sequence of Events** (64.41), **Factual Information** (67.54) and **Drawing Conclusions** (67.14).

STUDY SKILLS - Highest student performance is on objectives measuring **Using a Variety of Media** (89.63), **Reference Sources** (93.91) and **Symbols** (85.77). Approximately 23 percentage points separate student performance on **Outlining** (78.75) and **Reads and Follows Directions** (56.04).

CONTEXT GROUP REPORT [1]

The local school systems were given a socio-economic status classification based on average family income and average years of school completed according to 1970 Census Data. The parishes were ranked on these two indices. For each parish the two ranks were averaged. Context Group I is composed of the 25% highest rank averages. The 25% lowest rank averages were designated as Context Group III. Context Group II is composed of the middle 50% rank averages.

FIGURE 7 [2]
1977-78 STATE-WIDE CONTEXT GROUP DOMAIN PERFORMANCE
GRADE 4



1. Statistical Profile of Louisiana
Prepared by the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc.
Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1973

2. See Appendix I

FIGURE 8 [3]
1977-78 STATE-WIDE CONTEXT GROUP DOMAIN PERFORMANCE
GRADE 8

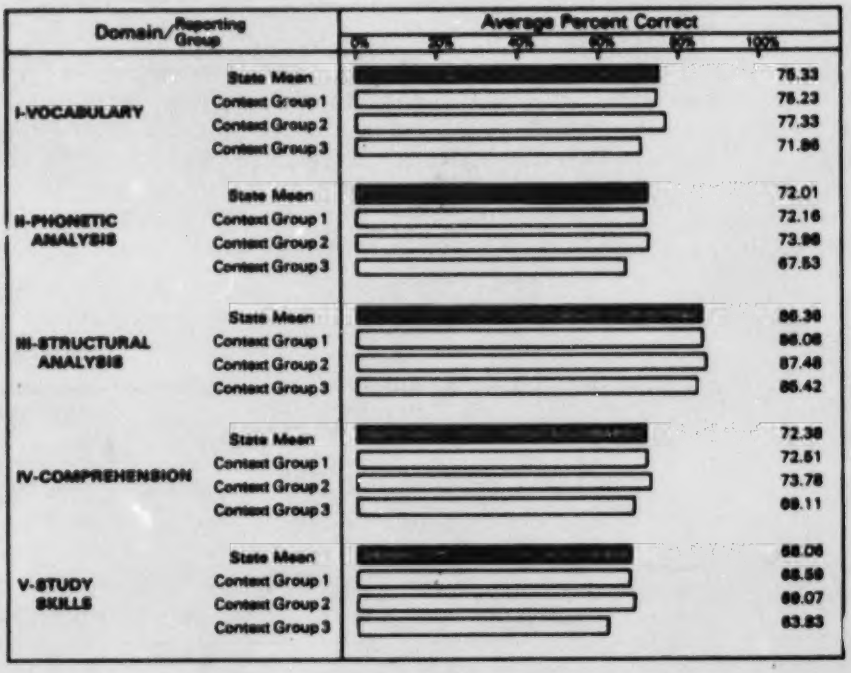
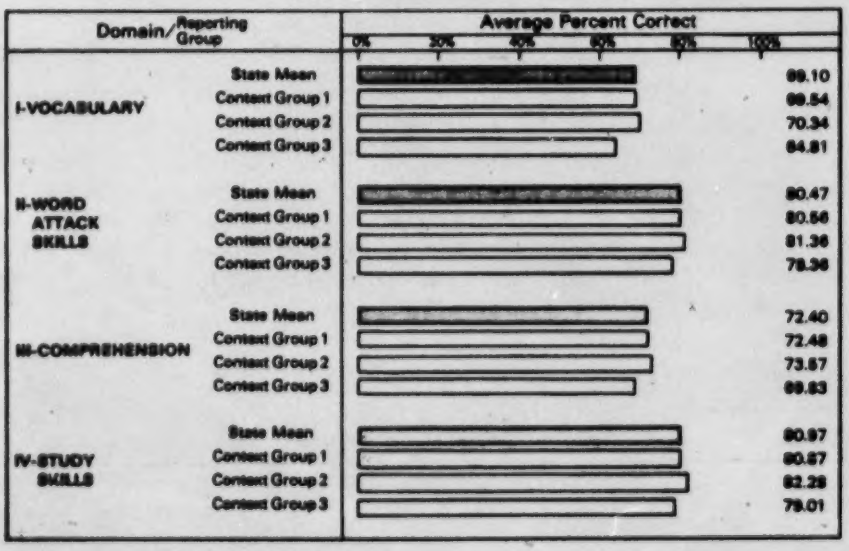


FIGURE 9 [4]
1977-78 STATE-WIDE CONTEXT GROUP DOMAIN PERFORMANCE
GRADE 11



3. See Appendix I

4. See Appendix I

SUB - GROUP REPORT FINDINGS [6]

CLASS SIZE

Data on individual class size were collected at the fourth-grade level only since the other two grade levels had departmentalized organizations. On the basis of these data, parishes were classified as having average class sizes less than 27, 27 to 30, and over 31. Although the data show that parishes with average class size in the over 31 range had larger average percents correct across domains and objectives, this is probably an artifact of the small number of students and hence classes in this range. There were 203 students enrolled in classes in this range as compared with over 20,000 students in classes in the 27 to 30 range and over 32,000 in the less than 27 size range.

COMMUNITY TYPE

At all grade levels and across all domains, students in suburban community-type schools outperformed those in city-, town-, or rural- community-type schools. Performance differences were greatest between suburban and city students.

SCHOOL SIZE

Schools were categorized as being in one of three groups on the basis of size-- roughly small, medium, or large. Differences in reading performance among the three size-groups were too small to be significant for grade 4 across all domains. For grade 8, the only difference approaching significance was on the Study Skills Domain in favor of students in the largest schools. For grade 11, differences were again too small to approach significance across all four domains assessed.

BIRTH DATES

On the basis of dates of birth, students were classified as behind, on, and ahead of schedule. At all grade levels and across all domains, those students classified as "on schedule" achieved higher scores than those achieved by the other two birth-date groups. Differences between the behind schedule group and the ahead of schedule all favored the accelerated group. As grade level increased, differences tended to be less pronounced among the birth-date groups.

MALE/FEMALE

Grade 4 females scored higher than males across all five domains, with differences being six to seven percentage points. Similarly, the 8th grade level female scores were higher with differences averaging about five percentage points. Grade 11 females scored higher than males on three domains with differences of two to four percentage points. No sex differences were observed in the fourth domain, Vocabulary.

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6. For detailed report, see Appendix II

TITLE I PARTICIPATION

Reading performance of Title I Participants on the various domains varied across the three grade levels in both expected and unexpected directions. Comprehension and Phonetic Analysis scores increased as grade level increased. Performance on the Vocabulary Domain was in the opposite direction with scores declining ten percentage points between Grades 4 and 8. Grade 11 Vocabulary scores continued the decline across grade levels but less markedly. On Structural Analysis, average percent correct increased between Grades 4 and 8 and then declined between the latter grade and Grade 11. The trend of scores for Study Skills was in the exact opposite direction, first declining then increasing.

TITLE I NON-PARTICIPATION

Average percent correct score of students who did not participate in the Title I programs was higher than those of students participating in these programs for all domains across all grade levels. Trends of scores were similar to those of students who were Title I Participants with the exception of Phonetic Analysis for which all scores of Grade 4 and 8 students were almost identical.

BILINGUALISM

Across the four language categories--English Only; English and French; English and Spanish; and, English and Other--differences in performance increased as the grade levels increased. At the fourth grade level, the greatest difference was 4.82 percentage points in Study Skills between students speaking English and a language other than French or Spanish and students speaking English and Spanish. Among eighth grade students, differences across the four categories were larger, generally favoring individuals speaking English and either Spanish or French over those speaking English only or English and a language other than French or Spanish. Small differences between the latter two groups favored the English Only group on two domains (Vocabulary and Structural Analysis) and the English and Other group on Study Skills. These two groups did not differ significantly in Phonetic Analysis and Comprehension. Differences of 5.69 to 11.42 percentage points were observed among the four language categories at the 11th grade level. Students speaking English and Spanish scored higher than all other students in all domains. Students speaking English Only had lower average percents correct than those in the remaining two categories although some differences were not significant (e.g., English Only versus English and French in the Comprehension domain).

ETHNIC GROUP

Among Grade 4 students, White Americans and Oriental Americans scored higher than the other ethnic groups in all domains. Performance between these two ethnic groups was significantly larger for the white group in Structural Analysis only. Other differences were not significant (ranging from .45 to 1.55 percentage points). Black American students had lower average percents correct across all domains. Performances of the other ethnic groups - American Indian, Spanish Surnamed American and Other - fluctuated from domain to domain between the above highest and lowest average percents correct.

At the eighth grade and the eleventh grade levels, White Americans and Black Americans had the highest and lowest average percents correct, respectively, across all five domains. The other ethnic groups demonstrated performances between these two extremes although the order varied from domain to domain.

LENGTH OF ENROLLMENT

At the grade 4 level students were, on the basis of length of time enrolled in the reporting schools, classified as new, one semester or less, more than one to two years, more than two full years, and invalid (no response or unknown). The largest differences were observed between the best performers (regardless of duration) and the "invalids". The only other significant differences were for the domains of Phonetic Analysis and Comprehension. In both instances the group with the shorter period in the school scored higher than the group with the longer period therein.

Among grade 8 students no significant differences in reading performance were observed on the basis of reporting length of enrollment in the reporting school. Differences between the "invalids" and all groups whose length of enrollment was reported were significantly in favor of the latter groups. Performance trends for grade 11 students, with one exception, were similar to those for grade 8 students. The exception was the Vocabulary Domain with the difference between new students and those enrolled more than two years approaching significance in favor of the new students. In general, reported length of enrollment appeared to have little effect on reading performance. In the few differences observed, the students with the briefer enrollments outperformed those enrolled for longer periods.

The Context Group Report and the Sub-Group Report Findings have been removed from the original document due to small print size.

(Appendices I and II, pp.14-21)